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THE INTERNET AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA DISPLACEMENT

By
Jessica Cartledge

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER'S OF ARTS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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The Internet and Traditional Media Displacement

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ABSTRACT

This study consists of a survey that measures how much of the Internet college students are using and why they are using it. Using the uses and gratifications perspective and an adapted version of Rubin's 1984 Television Motives Scale this study analyzes what gratifications media consumers are actively seeking to satisfy their communication needs. 217 students were surveyed and results showed that high Internet users were using traditional media less. The study also concluded that high and low Internet users have similar reasons for using the Internet.

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The Internet and Traditional Media Displacement

Nicholas Negroponte (1995), Director of the MIT media lab and author of the book *Being Digital*, had once predicted about the Internet:

The user community of the Internet will be in the main stream of everyday. Its demographics will look more and more like the demographics of the world itself. The information superhighway is more than a short cut to every book in the Library of Congress. It is creating a totally new, global social fabric. (p.183)

The Internet has been around since the 1970s but it wasn't until 1993 with the introduction of web browsers that people took notice of this unique communications medium and the number of people using the Internet exploded (Kaye, 1998). Computers once were very expensive machines owned by large corporations. They took up lots of space and were not practical for home use. Now, computers can be seen in the office, at home and in school and are used for various purposes (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000).

The Internet has changed the way that people live and communicate and it has also had a serious impact on how consumers use other types of media (Ferguson & Perse, 2000). Search engines like *Yahoo!* have been able to reach more adults than some popular television shows with over 25.4 million unduplicated users per month (Simpson, 1997). According to a media consumption study done by the Online Publishers Association in November of 2001, 52.8 million Americans use the Internet at work. The study also found that at work Internet users spend 34% percent their media minutes using the Internet

while only 30% percent are used on the television and 26% on the radio (2001).

In 2000, a survey done by the Round Table group reported that the Internet is rapidly displacing older media like television as a source of information for young adults in America. The survey concluded that among young adults 59% felt their household received more useful information from the Internet than from the newspapers and 53% percent said that they received more useful information from the Internet than from the television (Katz, 2000). As of July 2002, over one billion personal computers have been sold in the world and by 2008 that number is expected to reach two billion (BBC News, 2002).

Effects of New Media

Media researchers have always held an interest in new types of media and how they effectively blend into society and affect existing media. Researchers have found from historical patterns that when new media technologies are introduced there is typically an increase in audience fragmentation (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000).

The logical assumption underlying this type of displacement is that there is only so much time to consume various types of media. When people choose to spend time using a new media activity there probably will be a reduction in the amount of time spent with other media activities or non-media related tasks. A historical example of this type of displacement can be seen with the introduction of television (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000). The amount of time that people spent using other types of media and non-media activities was greatly reduced because they were spending time using the television. In a 1995 study, researchers found

that television viewing, book reading, telephone talking and letter writing were all greatly reduced because media consumers were spending time on computer bulletin boards (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000). Researchers have recently reported that heavy Internet users rarely watch television (Ferguson & Perse, 2000).

At one point in time, one of the major decisions to use the Internet depended upon whether people knew how to use a computer and if they had the equipment like modems or computer software (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1998). Now, the choice between traditional media and Internet use depends more upon how well these technologies satisfy certain uses and gratifications rather than the skill of the user (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000).

Why do people use the Internet?

Some researchers have identified communication, interaction and information as the major reasons that people use the Internet (Ebersole, 2000). Other researchers believe people use the Internet to enhance external social interaction (Morrison & Krugman, 2001). Many researchers believe that people use the Internet because of the variety of individual gratifications they can receive from it (Coffey & Stipp, 1997, Perse & Courtright, 1993).

The World Wide Web, which is based upon the Internet and makes use of the different mechanisms the Internet provides, is one of the most versatile mass mediums because of its ability to convey text, graphics, images, audio and video. Because of its capabilities like e-mail, online chats and video conferencing it can help promote and develop highly personal and professional relationships (Eighmey, 1997). Unlike the television, which mainly has affected how people

spend their leisure time, Internet technology has affected how people work, learn in school, conduct business, play and socialize with family or friends (Ebersole, 2000). The Internet has eliminated physical and social boundaries and helped facilitate interaction regardless of geography, religion or nationality (Postmes, Spears & Lea, 1998). Used as a conduit, the Internet can promote communication with those outside the home (James, Wotring & Forrest, 1995). Although most of the interactions online are virtual and not traditional interpersonal social interactions, the computer has proven to be effective when used as a medium to maintain and form these relationships (Morrison & Krugman, 2001).

While some people have found the social aspect of the Internet appealing others use the Internet to find information (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). The vast amount of information on the Internet can be beneficial to Internet users who wish to find information on specific topics or just peruse different areas of interest (Morrison & Krugman, 2001). The number of newspapers being published on the Internet has risen significantly throughout its existence. There were once only twenty newspapers being published on the Internet in 1994 and that amount rose to over 4,000 by 1997 (Althaus, 2000). In a study done by Ferguson and Perse (2000), results showed people used the Internet for accessing information and for activities that were goal directed and mindful. In another analysis of Internet use (Kaye & Johnson, 2002), participants typically responded that they used the Internet to find information rather than to fulfill entertainment needs. The Online Publisher's Association reported that the top reasons people used the Internet as a

news and information source was that information was detailed, up to date, accessible and available at their convenience (2001).

Television vs. The Internet

Although the Internet may provide particular gratifications to some people, others may choose the television or traditional media because of different gratifications they receive (Coffey & Stipp, 1997).

The television still remains a very popular medium for entertainment and other purposes (Coffey & Stipp, 1997). Previous research has shown that media consumers use the television in order to elevate their moods, relieve stress, and relax (Lee & Lee, 1995, Kippax & Murray, 1980). It has been used as a source of information (Steiner, 1963, Bower, 1973), and as a tool to facilitate social interaction (Morrison & Krugman, 2001). Some viewers use the television to imagine themselves as being part of a program's social world and see the media personalities as friends. Others may use the television as a source for conversation (Rubin, 1985). Research has shown that television programs are one of the most talked about topics for both men and women (Lee & Lee, 1995).

As the Internet becomes a regular part of the home and work environment the entertainment aspect of the Internet should become stronger. This may pose a threat to the television industry if the Internet can offer more entertainment than the television with as much convenience (Ferguson & Perse, 2000). The television and the Internet may also be competing as a way to pass time (Ferguson & Perse, 2000). For older people, television has often offered companionship, a way of passing time, and a connection to society (Atkins, 1976). Researchers

have found that the third most popular reason for watching television is for the sake of passing time (Rubin, 1984). The structural similarity of the Internet and the television has lead researchers to believe that these mediums may gratify similar needs (Kay & Medoff, 2001).

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications theory assumes that people communicate in order to satisfy personal goals (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974). Under the tenets of this theory audience members are seen as being active, goal directed, aware that using media can fulfill many of their needs, and able to articulate their reasons for using certain media (McLeod & Becker, 1981). The theory assumes that audience members choose specific media in order to gratify their individual needs (Kippax & Murray, 1980). Uses and gratifications theory also assumes that people are aware of media alternatives that can fulfill similar needs (Perse & Courtright, 1993).

Developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s, uses and gratifications theory tried to replace older ideas that perceived the audience member as a passive victim and instead focused on understanding how audiences were actively involved with mass communication (Blumler, 1979). This theory, or what many people might call an approach (Massey, 1995), has been welcomed by its supporters because it examines what people do to media instead of what media does to people (Katz, 1959). Earlier thoughts about media consumption assumed that audience members were indifferent and passively received media messages (Kaye & Johnshon, 2002). There are very few types of media that are likely to fill

everyone's needs. Therefore, most people are likely to select the media that can fill as many as their needs as possible (Perse & Courtright, 1993). Research using the uses and gratifications theory has shown that individuals are actually very good at finding media messages that fulfill their desired gratifications (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974).

Uses and gratifications theory has provided a successful framework for understanding the different levels of activity that media consumers engage in and the consequences of that degree of involvement (Massey, 1995). Because of this framework, researchers have encouraged applying uses and gratifications theory to study new communication technologies (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996) and the effects of new media adoption on traditional media (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974). Several researchers have also advocated using this approach for examining why individuals use the Internet (Kaye & Johnson, 2002). Since the Internet offers an array of material that can be accessed from various locations for many different purposes, uses and gratifications theory may be ideal choice in understanding the potential uses that the Internet has to offer (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996). The technology that requires Internet users to seek out what they want to look for on the Internet suggests that Internet users are aware of their needs they want to satisfy active and goal directed in doing so (Lin & Jeffres, 1998; Kaye & Johnson, 2002).

Assuming that uses and gratifications theory is valid, the literature review leads one to believe that individuals are active in choosing the media they use. Because there is more than one type of media to choose from and different

gratifications associated with each type of media, individuals who choose to use the Internet more than other consumers may derive different gratifications. The review of previous research has lead to the following hypothesis and research question.

RQ1: Do Internet uses gratifications differ between high and low Internet users?

H1: High Internet users will use the television and other media less than before Internet usage.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants were 217 undergraduates enrolled in a medium sized Midwestern university in speech communication classes. The participants included 94 males and 123 females. 72 of these participants normally accessed the Internet from home, 141 normally accessed the Internet from school and 5 normally accessed the Internet from work. These participants completed the survey voluntarily.

Method

Each student was handed a double-sided survey consisting an Internet Motives Scale on the front (See Appendix A) and a media use survey on the back. The directions were contained on both sides of the survey.

The Internet Motives Scale (See Appendix A) was modified from the Television Viewing Motives Scale developed by Greenberg (1974) and later modified by Rubin (Rubin 1981a, 1983). The alphas for the five-item version ranged from .79 to .93. The survey appears to have face validity because it

assesses a sense of television importance and an attachment to the medium. The scale appears to have face validity for the present study for similar reasons. Respondents for this study were asked to identify how much each statement is like their own reasons for using the Internet. Each motive for using the Internet was used in three statements randomly distributed throughout the survey that included: relaxation, companionship, habit, pass time, entertainment, social interaction, information, arousal, and escape (See Appendix B). Motivations for using the Internet were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale.

The second page of the survey (See Appendix A) collected demographics and asked respondents to write in the number of hours per day that they use particular media. There was also a 5-point Likert scale at the bottom of the page (See Appendix A) that asked respondents how much they agreed with statements regarding the Internet and how it has affected their use of other media.

RQ1: Two separate factor analyses were used to determine relational factors among high and low Internet users. Factor names were determined from looking at previously assigned groups (See Appendix B). An Eigenvalue of 1.0 or higher was used to determine statistical significance for a factor. For the factor analysis and analysis of variance the mean for the amount of time participants had spent online (See Appendix A, #30) was found and any score higher than the mean was considered high and scores lower than the mean were considered low.

H1: Due to the large amounts of participants for this study three analysis of variances were performed. The first analysis evaluated if respondents considered high Internet users (question 30) were spending less time using the

television (question 50). The second analysis of variance was performed to evaluate if heavy Internet users (question 30) were using the telephone less (question 52). The last analysis evaluated if heavy Internet users were using the radio less (question 51).

RESULTS

Factor Analysis

High Internet users had four main factors for using the Internet (See Table 4). The first factor was defined as passing time/habit (See Table 4). The Eigenvalue for this factor was 4.9. The next factor was defined as relaxation/arousal and the Eigenvalue was 4.4. The third factor was defined as companionship and the Eigenvalue was 2.6. The last factor was defined as information and the Eigenvalue was 2.4.

Low Internet users had three main factors (See Table 5). The first factor was defined as passing time and the Eigenvalue was 4.1. The next factor for low Internet users was defined as companionship and the Eigenvalue was 3.2. The last factor was defined as arousal and the Eigenvalue was 4.2.

Analysis of Variance

Using an alpha of .05, results from the first analysis of variance showed to be statistically significant at .000000 (Table 1) that heavy Internet users were spending less time watching television. The second analysis of variance showed results that were statistically significant at .000137 (See Table 2) that heavy Internet users were using the telephone less. The third analysis of variance

showed results that were statistically significant at .000583 (See Table 3) that heavy Internet users were using the radio less.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the existence of the Internet, technology has continuously improved. Negroponte (1995) was correct in predicting that the Internet would be in the main stream of everyday life. Because of the increase in accessibility and the availability to the public, the Internet has gained momentum and become a major part of our society (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000). The literature review acknowledged that a large percent of Internet consumers accessed the Internet at work (OPA, 2001). Similarly, the majority of the students for this study accessed the Internet from school. The students for this survey attended a university that provided Ethernet connections to the Internet and computer labs throughout the campus. Traditional media displacement may be caused by the ease of accessibility to the Internet in a professional environment and lack of other types of media in that same environment. However, besides just being convenient, the Internet also provides users a plethora of gratifications.

The Internet has changed the way we live and behave. It has developed into not only a new way of communicating (Eighmey, 1997) but also as a tool that defies geographical and social boundaries (Postmes, Spears & Lea, 1998). It has also become a network of knowledge where with a few clicks of the mouse people can find almost anything they are interested in (Papacharissi & Rubin 2000). The Internet has also been seen as a substitute for the television because of how people use it to pass time and for entertainment (Ferguson & Perse, 2000).

While initially it seemed that high and low Internet users would get different gratifications out of using the Internet, this study found that typically low and high Internet users seek relatively similar gratifications. For this study, both the high and low Internet users had passing time as one of their heaviest loaded factors. In other studies, researchers have not suggested that using the Internet to pass time was a major motivation. This study did concur with previous research (Ebersole, 2000, Eighmey, 1997, James, Wotring & Forrest, 1995) that suggested that communication and companionship were important reasons for people to use the Internet. This study also concluded that the Internet could be used for arousal or stimulation reasons. Previous research has not suggested that this may be an important motivation for people to use the Internet.

Limitations

This data was obtained after the September 11th, 2001 attacks. The attacks of September 11th changed how people use media and how media altered their tactics to appeal to consumers. After the attacks, people needed to know what was going on in the news. The Internet was one of the easiest types of media to access at work or at school and using the Internet may have become a habitual behavior for some people. The data of this study was different from related research. The September 11th attacks may have been an influencing factor regarding what motivates people to use the Internet. Further research may uncover how those attacks changed the way that people perceive the Internet especially in regards to other media.

This project and previous research has adapted the Television Viewing Motivation Scale in order to analyze what motivates people to use the Internet. There may be a need to invent an Internet Motives scale that is not derived from previous mass communication media. This may be a more effective tool in understanding a truly complex and innovative technology. It also may present a deeper understanding of the Internet without the preconceived notions of past traditional media.

This study also had a limited number of subjects. Because of the smaller number of people involved in this study only a “high” and a “low” Internet user were established. In an ideal setting there should also be a “medium” Internet user. This study also did not record the amount of time that respondents spent using traditional media before they started using the Internet and after. Obtaining this information may have uncovered different results.

Future Research

Future research should consider the motivations that this study has uncovered for using the Internet and consider how psychological needs might be linked to them.

Future research should look at how the television (or any type of media) and the Internet play off of one another and why that works. For example, the Today show is on television, but then they recommend that viewers should go to their web site after the show. It would be interesting to study whether the television show or web site gets more of the audience and what gratifications the Internet user is obtaining from going on the web site.

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Appendix A

Instructions: Here are some reasons that people have given for why they use the Internet. Please circle the number to indicate whether each reason is *exactly* (5), *a lot* (4), *somewhat* (3), *not much* (2), or *not at all* (1) like your own reasons for using the Internet.

I use the Internet...

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Because it relaxes me. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. So I won't have to be alone. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Just because it's there. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. When I have nothing better to do. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Because it entertains me. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Because it's a good way to meet people. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Because it helps me learn things about myself and others | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Because it's stimulating. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. So I can forget about school, work, or other things. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. Because it allows me to unwind. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. When there's no one else to talk to or be with. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. Because I just like to use it. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. Because it passes the time away, particularly when I'm bored. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. Because it's enjoyable. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. So I can talk with other people online. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. So I can learn about various current events, issues,
things I'm interested in. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. Because it's exciting. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 18. So I can get away from talking face to face with people. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19. Because it lets me zone out. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 20. Because it makes me feel less lonely. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21. Because it's a habit, just something I do. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 22. Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 23. Because it amuses me. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 24. So I can talk with my family or friends via e-mail,
Internet phone, or chat. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 25. When I need to find information on something. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 26. Because it perks me up. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 27. So I can get away from what I'm doing. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Appendix A

28. What is your gender? Please circle one. Male Female
29. Where do you normally access the Internet? Please circle one.
 Home Address School Address Work
30. On average, how many hours a day do you spend on the Internet? _____
31. On average, how many hours a day do you watch television? _____
32. On average, how many hours a day do you listen to the radio? _____
33. On average, how many hours do you talk on the phone? _____

In the last month, what have you used on the Internet? Check all that apply.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 34. _____ News | 42. _____ Search Engines |
| 35. _____ Books | 43. _____ Instant Messenger |
| 36. _____ E-mail | 44. _____ Magazines, newspapers |
| 37. _____ Telephone calls | 45. _____ Video or television |
| 38. _____ On-line chats | 46. _____ Stock market info or purchases |
| 39. _____ Advertisements | 47. _____ Radio or music |
| 40. _____ Weather | 48. _____ Sports |
| 41. _____ Games | 49. _____ Informative Sites |

Instructions: Please circle the number to indicate whether each sentence is *exactly* (5), *a lot* (4), *somewhat* (3), *not much* (2), or *not at all* (1), like your own feelings.

50. Since I have been using the Internet I have spent less time watching television.
 5 4 3 2 1
51. Since I have been using the Internet I feel that I have been spending less time listening to the non-Internet radio.
 5 4 3 2 1
52. Since I have been using the Internet I have been spending less time using the non-Internet telephone.
 5 4 3 2 1

Appendix B

Internet Use Motives Scale

Relaxation

- 1. Because it relaxes me.
- 10. Because it allows me to unwind
- 19. Because it lets me zone out

Companionship

- 2. So I won't have to be alone
- 11. When there's no one else to talk to or be with
- 20. Because it makes me feel less lonely

Habit

- 3. Just because it's there
- 12. Because I just like to use it
- 21. Because it's a habit, just something I do

Pass Time

- 4. When I have nothing better to do
- 13. Because it passes the time away, particularly when I'm bored
- 22. Because it gives me something to do to occupy my time

Entertainment

- 5. Because it entertains me
- 14. Because it's enjoyable
- 23. Because it amuses me

Social Interaction

- 6. Because it's a good way to meet people
- 15. So I can talk with other people online.
- 24. So I can talk with my family or friends via e-mail, Internet phone, or chat

Information

- 7. Because it helps me learn things about myself and others
- 16. So I can learn about various current events, issues, things I'm interested in
- 25. When I need to find information on something

Arousal

- 8. Because it's stimulating
- 17. Because it's exciting
- 26. Because it perks me up.

Escape

- 9. So I can forget about school, work, or other things
- 18. So I can get away from talking face to face with people
- 27. So I can get away from what I'm doing

Table One

Analysis of Variance Dependent Variable-Less Time Watching Television				
Variables	Count	Mean	F-Ratio	Prob.
Low Use	151	2.5	29.54	.000000
High Use	69	3.6		

Table Two

Analysis of Variance Dependent Variable-Less Time Using Phone				
Variables	Count	Mean	F-Ratio	Prob.
Low Use	151	1.85	15.07	.000137
High Use	69	2.5		

Table Three

Analysis of Variance Dependent Variable-Using the Radio Less				
Variables	Count	Mean	F-Ratio	Prob.
Low Use	151	2.34	12.18	.000583
High Use	69	3.06		

Table Four

Factor Analysis Report

High Internet Users				
Factor	Eigenvalue	% Variance	% Total Variance	Items
1-Passing Time/Habit	4.99	33.52	33.52	#4 Pass #13 Pass #22 Pass #3 Habit #21 Habit #12 Habit #5 Enter.
2-Relax/Arousal	4.4	29.63	63.15	#10 Relax #9 Escape #1 Relax #8 Arousal #17 Arousal
3-Companionship	2.6	17.66	80.81	#20 Comp. #11 Comp. #15 Social
4-Information	2.4	16.20	97.01	#7 Info.

Table Five

Factor Analysis Report

Low Internet Users				
Factor	Eigenvalue	% Variance	% Total Variance	Items
1-Passing Time	4.12	30.52	30.52	#13 Pass time #4 Pass Time #22 Pass Time
2-Companionship	3.23	23.88	54.41	#20 Companion #18 Escape #2 Companion
3-Arousal	4.28	31.65	86.06	#17 Arousal #26 Arousal #10 Relax #23 Entertain #8 Arousal

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